

DATE: November, 13, 2008

TO: Todd Schaller - Section Chief
Recreational Safety and Education Section

FROM: Brenda Von Rueden

SUBJECT: Report on 2008 Learn to Bear Hunt

GOALS OF THE PROGRAM

The goals of the Learn to Beat Hunt program are:

1. To provide a bear hunting experience to novice hunters who would not otherwise get that chance to hunt bear other than through the Learn to Hunt Program.
2. To provide a safe and memorable first-time introductory bear hunting experience to novice hunters through experienced and qualified mentors.
3. To teach novice hunters about the habits of bear, how to read bear sign, check baits, track and handle hounds, use proper shooting techniques and safely handle firearms.
4. To provide an opportunity for experienced bear hunters to contribute to overall conservation efforts by giving something back to the hunting heritage through recruiting the next generation of safe, legal, ethical and responsible hunters to carry on the bear hunting tradition.

MODIFICATIONS BASED ON WORK IN 2008

In the spring of 2008, based on several years of experience with the Learn to Bear Hunt Program, the Department staff and the Wisconsin Bear Hunters Association worked together to make modifications in procedures used in the implementation of the Learn to Hunt Program.

Those modifications were captured on the DNR website at:

<http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/wildlife/hunt/bear/guidelines.pdf>

RESULTS OF 2008 LEARN TO HUNT PROGRAM

The Learn to Bear Hunt drawing took place in Madison on July 15th, 2008. Present for the drawing were Rich Kirchmeyer, Kurt Thiede, Randy Stark, Jon King, Ben Mott (via conference call) and Brenda Von Rueden.

We had 171 participant applications. There were a total of 40 participants drawn at random knowing that only 27 would be able to participate. Our reason for drawing 40 was to ensure and secure spots if some of the top 27 were not able to participate.

The Learn to Bear Hunt Program hunt was held August 22nd, 23rd and 24th 2008. A variety of bait sitting and hound hunts took place in Bayfield, Chippewa, Douglas, Marinette, and Oconto counties. There were a total of 27 participants and 19 bear harvested.

Below are the results received from the Conservation Wardens who took part in the hunts:

Bayfield and Douglas Counties: Conservation Warden Jill Schartner, Patrick Quaintance, and Brad Biser.
(1 bait/3 hound hunts per Pat Q)
12 Participants 10 Bear Harvested

Chippewa County: Scott Bowe (4 bait sitter hunts per Jon King)
7 Participants 4 Bear Harvested

Marinette and Oconto Counties: Conservation Warden Matthew Meade and Joseph Paul (3 bait sitters/2 hound hunts per Joe Paul)
7 Participants 5 Bear Harvested

One participant hunted in Price County. No results were given for this participant.

Out of the 27 participants we had one cancellation. We were able to work with Jill Schartner of Bayfield County who had a local kid that was able to fill the vacancy.

There were approximately 140 mentors who applied and unfortunately we had more mentors than available hunts. 55 of the 140 mentors were paired with their desired locations to help with the hunts.

AFTER EVENT REVIEW, EVALUATION, AND PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

Because of the new process this year we held a conference call after the Learn to Hunt events to gather input from the wardens involved in the hunts, as well as Keith Warnke (Wildlife Management), Randy Stark, Jon King, Ben Mott, Kurt Thiede (Conservation Congress Liaison), David Argall (Customer Service) Rich Kirchmeyer, Scott Meyer and Brenda Von Rueden.

Based on the information provided on the conference call, the following recommendations were made for next years Learn to Bear Hunt.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2009

Dates and Deadlines

Hunt: August 28-30, 2009

Participant Applications: April 1, 2009- May 30, 2009

Drawing by June 10, 2009

Mentor Applications: accepted anytime

Proposed Drawing Process

Applications will be made available April 1st, 2009 and due May 30, 2009 (providing additional time compared to 2008)

Drawing held by June 10. Backgrounds completed and successful participants will be moved to the next round.

Select 60 possible participants (Assuming 20-25 tags) during the drawing. After the backgrounds the leftover applicants will then have an essay evaluated by a team led by LTH Coordinator, looking at content similar as previous years.

Participants who make it through that portion of the process will be handled in one of two ways.

1. A number reflective of tags allotted plus alternates ranked by central office provided to Wardens for contact. (Contact could be done by CO).
2. A number reflective of tags allotted plus alternates provided to Wardens for selection and ranking. Warden will contact participants advising on standing.

Discussed Problems and Resolution

1. Statewide Organization Hunts: Provide 3-4 tags (NWTF, WBH, CC and WWF). Tags will be placed on the top of list. Drawing from these groups must be done and turned in by May 15, 2009. Organizations can participate in the field day nearest them or have there own event upon approval of Local Warden and LTH Coordinator. Organization must participate in 2009 to be offered future tags.
2. Tags will have blank information and look like the current tags but in a blaze orange color. Warden will complete name/address with marker. Tags will be numbered and logged as to who they are distributed to. Similar type tag could be used for LTH turkey/deer programs (Wildlife approval)
3. Number of mentors, dog handlers and helpers for the event will remain under the control of the Warden. Background checks will be conducted on all members who participate, even if they have a minor role in the program.
4. Communication plan established for announcing LTH program and April 1, 2009 application process. Provides a chance for Wardens to advertize locally and may cause a growth in participant pool.
5. Add 2 additional pages to participant application:
Page 3 - Explaining the need to participate in baiting and scouting ahead of the event. Allowing for a more complete LTH event, get it away from the killing only portion of event.
Page 4 - Essay section "In 600 words please explain why you are interested in the LTH event and what it will mean to you if you are selected."
6. Letter sent to all approved mentors providing LTH dates and instructions to contact their local warden to express interest in the program. If they helped with past event, to contact that warden for interest in helping again. If they want to bring someone new into the mentor program an application must be submit and background check conducted.

7. When application is received in the mail the applications should be reviewed and processed weekly. Place applicant information onto a post card and get them ready for the drawing on June 10, 2009.